

Tafseer Suratul Faatihah

تفسير سورة الفاتحة

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Tafseer of Suratul Faatihah

By Shaykh Saalih bin Fawzaan al Fawzaan

Taken from his Arabic book entitled, *Duroos at Tafseer fil Masjid al Haraam*. vol. 1 p19-29. ¹

Suratul Faatihah سورة الفاتحة

- (1) بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
- (2) الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
- (3) الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
- (4) مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ
- (5) إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ
- (6) اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ
- (7) صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

Translation² of the Meanings of Suratul Faatihah (from Muhsin Khan's *The Noble Qur'aan*):

1. In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.
2. All the praises and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of the 'Alameen (mankind, jinns and all that exists).
3. The Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.
4. The Only Owner (and the Only Ruling Judge) of the Day of Recompense (i.e. the Day of Resurrection)
5. You (Alone) we worship, and You (Alone) we ask for help (for each and everything).
6. Guide us to the Straight Way
7. The Way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not (the way) of those who earned Your Anger (such as the Jews), nor of those who went astray (such as the Christians).

Tafseer Explanation

All praises are for Allaah the Lord of the worlds. Peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad and on his family and all his companions.

As for what follows:

¹ Translated by Umm 'Abdir Rahman Tara Hashim, Riyadh Saudi Arabia 1438.

² Translator's Note (TN): The Qur'aan can never be translated into another language and still be called the 'Qur'aan in English'. The Qur'aan is only in Arabic but the meanings of the Qur'aan can be conveyed in other languages. This is called 'tafseer' explanation. 'A translation of the meanings of the Qur'aan' is a more accurate description.

Suratul Faatihah is called Ummul Qur'aan, the seven oft repeated verses (because it consists of seven aayaat). It is called Ruqyah because it is recited over the sick and the one who has been bitten by snakes and scorpions. It is called al Kaafiyah because it suffices. All these names indicate the greatness of this surah because when something has many names and descriptions it points to its greatness. It is the opening chapter of the noble Mushaf, the Opening of the Qur'aan. It contains amazing secrets and great rulings.

Aayah 1

﴿بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ﴾

In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

The 'basmalah' بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ begins every surah in the Qur'aan except Suratul Baraa'ah (Surah at-Tawbah chapter 9). It is an independent aayah of Allaah's Book and it is not an aayah of Suratul Faatihah or any others. It is a separate verse except in Suratul Naml (chapter 27) where it is a part of an aayah of that Surah: Allaah the Exalted Says:

﴿إِنَّهُ مِنْ سُلَيْمَانَ وَإِنَّهُ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ﴾

"Verily! It is from Sulaiman (Solomon), and verily! It (reads): In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful. [al Naml 27:30]

The basmalah was sent down to be a separator between the suwar (chapters). It is not written before poetry which contains lies or is defamatory. It is written and starts lofty matters. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to write it in his correspondences for da'wah to Allaah. The same way that Sulaymaan عليه السلام wrote it in his letter to Bilqees, the Queen of Sheeba, calling her to Allaah, the Exalted. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to begin his speeches in his noble gatherings with the basmalah. It is a great dhikr, remembrance.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ In the Name of Allaah The 'ba' is for 'seeking help': I seek help in the name of Allaah and I seek blessings in all the Names of Allaah and I seek help with all Allaah's Names. The word 'ism' Name is singular and in an 'idaafah' grammatical construction. If a word is singular and in an idaafah construction it indicates generality so it means 'in all Allaah's Names'.

﴿وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا ۖ وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ﴾

And (all) the Most Beautiful Names belong to Allah , so call on Him by them. [al 'Aaraaf 7:180]

The genitive construction is connected to something removed that should normally come later. If the subject is placed after with the object coming first it means the sentence is restricted.

اللَّهُ 'Allaah' is a proper noun for Allaah's Self that no-one else is named with. 'Allaah' means the One to be worshipped, Al Uloohiyyah الألوهية which is al Uboodiyyah العبودية = worshipped. Allaah is the One to be worshipped in truth المألوه حقا al Ma'looh which means al Ma'bood المعبود حقا the One to be worshipped in truth and no-one else. He is the Beloved المحبوب. From the meanings of al Ilaah الإله is 'the Mahboob' the beloved whom the hearts love and worship.

He is the One to be worshipped the Ma'bood, the Ma'looh and the Beloved Mahboob that the hearts love and no-one is called by the name 'Allaah' except Allaah, the Glorified and Exalted.

الرحمن الرحيم ar Rahmaan and ar Raheem (The Most Merciful and the Especially Merciful) are two Names from the Names of Allaah encompassing Mercy. Mercy is one of Allaah's Attributes. He has mercy on His servants with an abundance of mercy and with his special mercy. Rahmah, Mercy is an Attribute of Allaah and ar Rahmaan, the Most Merciful is His Name. It is said that ar Rahmaan is general mercy for all of the creation and ar Raheem is a specific mercy for the believers. As Allaah says,

﴿وَكَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَحِيمًا﴾

And He is Ever Most Merciful to the believers. [Ahzaab 33:43]

Aayah 2

﴿الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ﴾

All the praises and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of the 'Alameen (mankind, jinns and all that exists).

الحمد لله All praises are for Allaah *Alhamdulillah* is praising the One to be praised. So 'alhamdulillah' is all praises are for Allaah, the Exalted and Glorified. He is the One that deserves all praises. The 'al' is for comprehensiveness. This means that all the praises are completely for Allaah, they belong to Him and He deserves them. He is praised from every aspect: He is praised for His Self, His Names and Attributes and His Actions. He is praised in the beginning and at the end. His is the complete praise. This is due to Him being the One who bestows every blessing.

﴿وَمَا بِكُمْ مِّنْ نِّعْمَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ﴾

And whatever of blessings and good things you have, it is from Allah.

He is praised for His actions. All of them are praiseworthy. All His Names and Attributes are praiseworthy. His Self is praiseworthy. So He has the complete and absolute praise from all aspects.

رب العلمين Lord of the worlds *Rabb*, Lord means the King, the Master, the Nurturer. This is because He nurtures His creation with His blessings and He feeds them with His provisions. So He is the Lord of everything and that is why He says العلمين 'the worlds'. The word عالمين is the plural of عالم. 'World' is everything besides Allaah. There are many worlds: in the sky, earth, land, sea, worlds that only Allaah know about. All the worlds are in need of Allaah whilst Allaah is Rich and free of need from His creation. Allaah is the One who created and provided for all of the creation. All of the worlds, the higher and the lower worlds need Allaah. Allaah is al *Ghane*, the Rich; al *Hameed*, the Praiseworthy. He is Rich and not in need of His creation. As for the creation, they are in need of Allaah.

Aayah 3

﴿الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ﴾

The Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

I have already spoken about these names previously. They are two of Allaah's Names. They consist of one of Allaah's lofty Attributes and that is الرحمة ar Rahmah 'mercy'.

Aayah 4

﴿مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ﴾

The Only Owner (and the Only Ruling Judge) of the Day of Recompense (i.e. the Day of Resurrection)

مالك The Only Owner *Maalik* (long vowel) - Owner of the Day of Judgement.

In one Qiraa'ah³ ملك *Malik* (short vowel) - King of the Day of Judgement.

يوم الدين The Day of Recompense يوم الحساب is the Day of Reckoning. In this aayah 'ad deen' means 'reckoning'. Day of Judgement means Day of Resurrection يوم القيامة.

Allaah is the King on that Day. In another aayah Allaah Says:

﴿يَوْمَ هُمْ بَارِزُونَ عَلَىٰ يَحْفَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ مِنْهُمْ شَيْءٌ لِّمَنِ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ لِلَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ﴾

Whose is the kingdom this Day? (Allah Himself will reply to His Question): It is Allah's the One, the Irresistible! [Ghaafir 40:16]

The Kings return to Allaah. In the Next Life there will be no Kings except Allaah. He will be the only King (as in the aayah):

﴿يَوْمَ هُمْ بَارِزُونَ عَلَىٰ يَحْفَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ مِنْهُمْ شَيْءٌ لِّمَنِ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ لِلَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ﴾

Whose is the kingdom this Day? (Allah Himself will reply to His Question): It is Allah's the One, the Irresistible! [Ghaafir 40:16]

Everyone on that Day will be equal in front of the Lord of the Worlds. Everyone will be brought to account and recompensed for his deeds. If the deeds were good then the recompense will be good and if they were bad, then it will be bad. No-one will be distinguished from another except by *Taqwa*, God consciousness. The Sovereignty that existed in the world including Kings, Leadership, wealth and status – all will come to an end along with the world. Only deeds and recompense will remain in the Next Life.

³ TN: The word '*maaliki*' (with a long vowel) is from the Qiraa'ah of Hafs – the most common Qiraa'ah in the world today. (3 other Qiraa'aat also pronounce it this way – Kisaa'ee, Ya'qoob and Khalaf). You will hear some reciters say '*maliki*' (with a short vowel) from the Qiraa'ah of the remaining 6 not mentioned in the point above – the most common is Warsh and Qaalooun. Both ways are acceptable but the Qiraa'aat cannot be mixed and matched.

Aayah 5

﴿إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ﴾

You (Alone) we worship, and You (Alone) we ask for help (for each and everything).

The origin of this is 'We worship You and we seek help from You'. The object of the sentence was brought first before the subject to indicate the meaning of restriction. Meaning that 'We do not worship other than You' (worship is restricted to Allaah alone).

إِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ Meaning: We do not seek help except from You. This is restricting worship and seeking help to Allaah alone. Seeking help is a type of worship. However, it was joined to 'worship' because it was something specific added to the general to indicate the importance of seeking help.

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ Meaning: this is for Allaah. His right over His servants.

﴿وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ﴾

And I (Allah) created not the jinns and humans except they should worship Me (Alone).
[Dhaariyaat 51:56]

So worship is Allaah's right over His servants as comes in the hadeeth of Mu'adh bin Jabal رضي الله عنه

'O Mu'adh! Do you know what Allaah's right is on his servants?' He said 'Allaah and His Messenger know best'. He said, 'that Allaah is worshipped without associating anything with Him. He said, 'Do you know what right they have on Him if they do this?' He said, 'Allaah and His Messenger know best'. He said, 'That they will not be punished'.⁴

As for نستعين seeking help, this is for the servant who is in need of Allaah's help. This is due to His noble promise to help those who ask for His help.

Aayah 6

﴿اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ﴾

Guide us to the Straight Way

اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ Guide us to the Way. Seeking guidance from Allaah.

There are two types of guidance:

1. Guiding to the right way
2. Success in guiding.

This du'aa comprises both types of guidance. You ask Allaah for guidance to the path and guidance of success.

The first type of guidance is for every believer and disbeliever. Allaah has guided the people, meaning that He has indicated the path to happiness.

⁴ Collected in Saheeh al Bukhaaree number 2856; Saheeh Muslim number 30.

﴿وَأَمَّا ثَمُودُ فَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ فَاسْتَحَبُّوا الْعَمَىٰ عَلَى الْهُدَىٰ﴾

And as for Thamud, We showed and made clear to them the Path of Truth (Islamic Monotheism) through Our Messenger, (i.e. showed them the way of success), but they preferred blindness to guidance. [Fussilat 41:17]

We guided them meaning that we clarified and showed them the truth but they did not accept it and they were not given success to accept it. So general guidance is the guidance of showing them the right path which is for everyone.

As for the guidance of success and remaining firm upon the truth, it is specifically for the believers. Allaah guided them means He granted them success and made them firm upon the truth. This is why guidance was negated for the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم but affirmed for Allaah in the aayah:

﴿إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ﴾

Verily! You (O Muhammad) guide not whom you like, but Allah guides whom He wills. And He knows best those who are the guided. [Qasas 28:56]

Here it affirms that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم guides. So what is negated is the guidance of success هدية التوفيق which only Allaah possesses. No-one else can do this apart from Allaah. The hearts are in Allaah's Hand and as for the guidance that is affirmed for the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم it is the guidance to the right path. The Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم was a guide مرشد and clarified the truth and he forbade evil, disbelief and deviation.

الصراط المستقيم **The Straight Way** Meaning the moderate path. Allaah's path is straight, moderate without being crooked. It is one path that all the Messengers and their followers were upon.

Aayah 7

﴿صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ﴾

The Way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not (the way) of those who earned Your Anger (such as the Jews), nor of those who went astray (such as the Christians).

صراط الذين أنعمت عليهم **The Way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace**

He linked it (the path) to those He had blessed. So who are those that He has blessed? This is clarified in another aayah:

﴿وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ ۚ وَحَسُنَ أُولَٰئِكَ رَفِيقًا﴾

And whoso obeys Allah and the Messenger (Muhammad), then they will be in the company of those on whom Allah has bestowed His Grace, of the Prophets, the *Siddiqun* (those followers of the Prophets who were first and foremost to believe in them, like Abu Bakr As-Siddiq), the martyrs, and the righteous. And how excellent these companions are! [Nisaa 4:69]

Those who tread this path are the ones that Allaah has blessed from among the Prophets, Messengers, Truthful, Martyrs and Righteous. These are the levels of the believers from the beginning of creation to the end – the Prophets, the Truthful, the Martyrs and the Righteous. The highest level are the Prophets عليهم الصلاة والسلام then after the Prophets come the Truthful, then after the Truthful, the Martyrs, then after the Martyrs, the Righteous from the rest of the believers. You ask Allaah to make you of these people and to tread their path to reach Allaah and His Paradise.

Allaah's Path is always one and the same, there are others. Allaah associates the path to Himself (Allaah's Path) because He is the One Who legislated it and guided people to it. He also associates it to these He has blessed because they are the ones that tread its path, stick to it and strive to have knowledge about it – they are the people of knowledge and action.

غير المغضوب عليهم] not (the way) of those who earned Your Anger (such as the Jews),

Meaning: not the path of those who earned Your anger. These are the people who have knowledge but they do not act upon it, such as the Jews who had knowledge but did not act on it. They sought knowledge but left off acting upon it. Knowledge without action does not benefit. Indeed it becomes a proof against the person. He becomes of those who earned Allaah's anger because his crime is more severe. He disobeyed Allaah whilst knowing about it so Allaah was angry with him. He left the truth despite knowing it. Every scholar who does not act upon his knowledge has earned Allaah's anger. He will be the first for whom hell fire will be kindled on the Day of Resurrection. Knowledge necessitates action.⁵

ولا الضالين] nor of those who went astray (such as the Christians) The people who are astray act but do not have knowledge. They act without proofs. At the forefront of these are the Christians who have worship and monks but they do not have knowledge. The Christians and whoever is like them such as the people of innovations and superstitions and whoever acts without knowledge, without proofs from Allaah's Book or the Sunnah of His Messenger is deviant, lost and astray from the path. The first category (the Jews and those like them) left the path despite knowing it and the second category (the Christians and those like them) did not know the path and acted without guidance. So you are asking Allaah to keep you away from both of these paths – the path of knowledge without action and the path of action without knowledge and to grant you success upon the first path with is knowledge and action. Allaah Says:

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ﴾

It is He Who has sent His Messenger (Muhammad) with guidance and the religion of truth (Islam) [Tawbah 9:33]

'Huda' guidance (in the above aayah) is beneficial knowledge and 'deenul haqq' the religion of truth (in the above aayah) is righteous good deeds. This is what the Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم came with: beneficial knowledge and righteous actions and this is the path of those Allaah has blessed.

When you have finished reciting this Surah in your *Salaah* or at other times, you say 'Aameen'. The meaning of 'Aameen' is 'O Allaah respond!' This is because Suratul Faatihah is a du'aa (supplication). So you say 'aameen' to this du'aa. In the *Salaah* that is recited aloud, the Imaam and those following him say *aameen*. In the *Salaah* that is recited quietly every person says *aameen* quietly to himself. Saying 'aameen' after Suratul Faatihah is recommended – *mustahabb*. It is from the *Sunan* of *Salaah* (Supererogatory extra actions).

This Surah includes great sciences and principles. First of all it includes the three categories of *Tawheed*: *Tawheed ar Ruboobiyyah*, *Tawheed al Uloohiyyah* and *Tawheed al Asmaa' waSiffaat*.

⁵ Hadeeth of Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه "The first of the creation for whom the Fire will be kindled on the Day of Resurrection are three...from them is the scholar who recited the Qur'aan in order for it to be said that he is a reciter, and he learned knowledge in order for it to be said that he is a scholar, and it will be said to him, "That was said," then the order will be given regarding him and he will be dragged upon his face and flung into the Fire." (Muslim no. 4688 quoted in 'The Evil of Craving for Wealth and Status' by al Haafiz ibn Rajab al Hanbalee. Translated by Aboo Talhah. 1995)

Tawheed ar Ruboobiyyah is in aayaat 2-4 because these are the descriptions of the Lord:

﴿الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۝ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝ مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ﴾

All the praises and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of the 'Alamin (mankind, jinns and all that exists).

The Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful. The Only Owner (and the Only Ruling Judge) of the Day of Recompense (i.e. the Day of Resurrection)

Tawheed al Uloohiyyah is in aayah 5 onwards:

﴿إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ۝ اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ﴾

You (Alone) we worship, and You (Alone) we ask for help (for each and everything). Guide us to the Straight Way

Tawheed al Asmaa' wasSiffaat is in aayaat 2 and 3. These are some of the Names of Allaah.

﴿الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝ مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ﴾

There are three types of *Tawheed*. Allaah started the Qur'aan with the three types of *Tawheed* and ended the Qur'aan with them:

	Suratul Faatihah	Suratun Naas
<i>Tawheed ar Ruboobiyyah</i>	رب العلمين	برب الناس
<i>Tawheed al Uloohiyyah</i>	إياك نعبد	إله الناس
<i>Tawheed al Asmaa' waSiffaat</i>	الرب الرحمن الرحيم	ملك الناس

Suratul Faatihah is made up of two parts:

1. The first part is praising Allaah up until the words إياك نعبد 'You alone we worship'.
2. The second part is making *du'aa* of asking from the Saying of Allaah وإياك نستعين 'You alone we ask for help' till the end of the Surah. This is the meaning of Allaah's Saying 'I have divided the *Salaah*'. *Salaah* means Suratul Faatihah. It is called '*salaah*' as it is also one of its names.

In this Surah is a refutation of the *mushrik* polytheists who deny the resurrection.

Allaah says ملك يوم الدين 'Owner of the Day of Judgement'. The Day of Judgement is the Day of Recompense.

There is also a refutation of all the groups of disbelief and the polytheists who worship other than Allaah. This refutation is found in the Saying إياك نعبد وإياك نستعين 'You alone we worship and You alone we ask for help'. This is where worship and seeking help is restricted solely to Allaah. This points to the invalidity of shirk.

In this surah there is a refutation of the *Mu'attilah* from the *Jahmiyyah* and the *Mu'tazilah*⁶ and whoever follows their path in denying Allaah's Names and Attributes. Allaah affirmed for Himself His Names and Attributes in this Surah.

⁶ TN: The *Mu'attilah*, *Jahmiyyah* and *Mu'tazilah* are three of the deviant sects who deny Allaah's Names and Attributes among their various other deviant beliefs.

In this surah there is a refutation of the Jews and Christians in the Saying غير المغضوب عليهم ولا الضالين 'not (the way) of those who earned Your Anger (such as the Jews), nor of those who went astray (such as the Christians)'. So this surah comprises a refutation of all the groups of disbelievers: the *Mushriks*, those who deny and negate the Names and Attributes of Allaah, the People of the Book, the Jews and the Christians.

It refutes the deviant groups and affirms the Messages. It mentions رب العالمين 'Lord of the worlds'. From His Lordship, *Ruboobiyyah*, is the sending of the Messengers with the Message. From His Lordship is His sending the Messengers to His servants to guide them. It is also from His Mercy that He sends the Messengers to show them the truth and explain it to them. So this is the meaning of His Lordship and His Mercy. In this is the affirmation of the Messages.

This is a great Surah which comprises these exalted meanings. There are seven aayaat. Allaah Says:

﴿وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِنَ الْمَثَانِي﴾

And indeed, We have bestowed upon you seven of Al-Mathani (the seven repeatedly recited Verses), (i.e. Surat Al-Fatiha) Al Hijr [15:87]

This is some of what is said about this great Surah and there is no time to expand further on this.

We ask Allaah, the Exalted to benefit us and you from what we have learned and to teach us that which will benefit us, and to make us and you of those who are guided and who guide others, without being astray or leading others astray. We ask Allaah to make us, you and all the Muslims firm upon the truth and the straight path. And the peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad and upon his family and all his Companions.

